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The Navy Did It His Way

WARM BODIES. By Donald E. Morris. Illustrated by Frederick E. Banbery. 204 pp. New York: Simon and Schuster. \$3.50.

By E. B. GARSIDE

THIS lighthearted tale of romance and duty, most of it drydock, aboard a peacetime LST is written by a young naval officer with a fine flair for the ludicrous. He breezes along at a reckless pace; he has wit without a trace of cruelty or spite, and he knows how to plant a gag and let it lie, like a quietly ticking bomb, until the perfect moment for its explosion comes. If Donald E. Morris is ever captious enough to sever his naval connection after fifteen years of service, including four at Annapolis, he should have no trouble qualifying as inventor of TV comedy routines.

Indeed, on the strength of one character alone, Mr. Morris' "Warm Bodies" may very well appear, at some not too distant date, on Broadway in musical comedy guise, its mischievous merriment all the more beguiling thanks to songs, dances and pretty girls. This character is Shrieking Eagle Garfield.

Shrieking Eagle joined up the day after Pearl Harbor, but is still an apprentice seaman. Shrieking's backwardness is mainly rooted in the fact that he speaks only Chickasaw, and obdurately refuses to learn an alien tongue. In consequence his superiors must converse with him in Chickasaw. Besides, with many oil-rich relatives such as Options, Gushing and Black Gold Garfield, who supply him, biweekly, with pin money in the amount of \$12,789, and who rush collectively to seek redress, through a battery of lawyers, from the Secretary of the Navy when Shrieking is slated for court-martial, he has little inducement to improve his benighted lot.

Shrieking Eagle is not the only fantasy in foul weather gear to spring, improbable yet larger than life, from Mr. Morris' lively brain. Bosworth O'Gara, captain of the LST, runs him a close second, whether fishing for

Mr. Garside, a novelist and translator, served in our World War II Navy.

Viewpoints

IN very few professions is the cleavage between bachelors and married men as deep as it is in the Navy. Bachelors find on their ships a nucleus for their lives. They are forever worrying about the drapes in the wardroom and the fact that Diesel oil is again leaking from the showers. The married officers, for their part, look on the ship as a sort of office, in which a certain amount of time must be spent daily before they are at liberty to return home. — "Warm Bodies."

fish he never catches or facing the gale. The skipper is an earnest man. At sea he sleeps with his clothes on, ready at the least alarm to answer duty's call. But when he speeds to the breach, it is his precipitous tendency to collide with some unyielding object and lay himself low. No matter, O'Gara is the soul of naval obligation, a salt in every nerve.

AND we must not forget while Shrieking Eagle is catching and eating raw the only coelacanth in Atlantic waters and while Commander Bintle, regulations' embodiment, is making his annual inspection, that a madcap love story is concurrently developing. This love story takes us, with the smitten executive officer, past Lye, Va., the last bus stop, to Little Hominy, in the remotest Appalachians. There, in a columned mansion, guarded by a massive dog with spots, lives Sally. Sally is a delicious, blue-eyed redhead, and very hard to get, emotionally, geographically and telephonically. But the exec persists, and the spoof winds up in a wedding that is a grand fireworks burst of farcicality.

This is a delightful book, fresh, warmhearted and full of fun. We liked it, every page. The illustrations, done in scribbly pen-and-ink by Frederick E. Banbery, reflect the quirkish mood perfectly, and are not intrusive. Finally, in case you've been wondering what a "warm body" is, say, as distinguished from a vile one, on page 66 Mr. Morris explains that it is any "man with at least one arm and two fingers who can pick up something when he is told to"